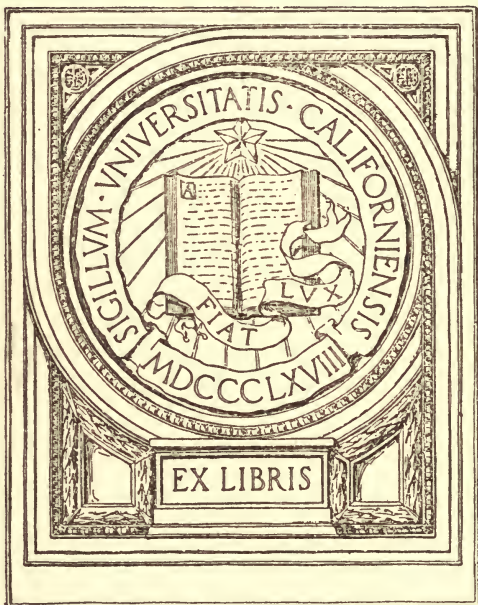


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POEMS.

BY
SIDNEY LANIER.



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DEDICATION.

TO CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

As Love will carve dear names upon a tree,
Symbol of gravure on his heart to be,

So thought I thine with loving text to set
In the growth and substance of my canzonet;

But, writing it, my tears begin to fall—
This wild-rose stem for thy large name's too small!

Nay, still my trembling hands are fain, are fain
Cut the good letters though they lap again;

Perchance such folk as mark the blur and stain
Will say, *It was the beating of the rain;*

Or, haply these o'er-woundings of the stem
May loose some little balm, to plead for them.

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CORN.

TO-DAY the woods are trembling through and through
With shimmering forms, that flash before my view,
Then melt in green as dawn-stars melt in blue.

The leaves that wave against my cheek caress
Like women's hands; the embracing boughs express

A subtlety of mighty tenderness;

The copse-depths into little noises start,
That sound anon like beatings of a heart,
Anon like talk 'twixt lips not far apart.

The beech dreams balm, as a dreamer hums a song;
Through that vague wafture, expirations strong
Throb from young hickories breathing deep and long

With stress and urgency bold of prisoned spring
And ecstasy of burgeoning.

Now, since the dew-plashed road of morn is dry,
Forth venture odors of more quality
And heavenlier giving. — Like Jove's locks awry,
Long muscadines

Rich-wreathe the spacious foreheads of great pines,
And breathe ambrosial passion from their vines.

I pray with mosses, ferns and flowers shy
That hide like gentle nuns from human eye
To lift adoring perfumes to the sky.

I hear faint bridal-sighs of brown and green
Dying to silent hints of kisses keen

As far lights fringe into a pleasant sheen

I start at fragmentary whispers, blown
From undertalks of leafy souls unknown,
Vague purports sweet, of inarticulate tone.

Dreaming of gods, men, nuns and brides, between
Old companies of oaks that inward lean
To join their radiant amplitudes of green,

I slowly move, with ranging looks that pass
Up from the matted miracles of grass
Into yon veined complex of space
Where sky and leafage interlace
So close, the heaven of blue is seen
Inwoven with a heaven of green.

I wander to the zigzag-cornered fence
Where sassafras, intrenched in brambles dense,
Contests with stolid vehemence
The march of culture, setting limb and thorn
As pikes against the army of the corn.

There, while I pause, my fieldward-faring eyes
Take harvests, where the stately corn-ranks rise,
Of inward dignities
And large benignities and insights wise,
Graces and modest majesties.

Thus, without theft, I reap another's field ;
Thus, without tilth, I house a wondrous yield,
Heaping my heart with quintuple crops concealed.

Look, out of line one tall corn-captain stands
Advanced beyond the foremost of his bands,
And waves his blades upon the very edge
And hottest thicket of the battling hedge.

Thou lustrous stalk, that ne'er mayst walk nor talk,
Still shalt thou type the poet-soul sublime
That leads the vanward of his timid time
And sings up cowards with commanding rhyme—
Soul calm, like thee, yet fain, like thee, to grow
By double increment, above, below ;

Soul homely, as thou art, yet rich in grace like thee,
Teaching the yeomen selfless chivalry
That moves in gentle curves of courtesy ;
Soul filled like thy long veins with sweetness tense,
By every godlike sense

Transmuted from the four wild elements.

Drawn to high plans,

Thou lift'st more stature than a mortal man's,
Yet ever piercest downward in the mould
And keepest hold

Upon the reverend and steadfast earth

That gave thee birth.

Yea, standest smiling in thy very grave,

Serene and brave,

With unremitting breath

Inhaling life from death,

Thine epitaph writ fair in fruitage eloquent,

Thy living self thy monument.

As poets should,

Thou hast built up thy hardihood

With wondrous-varying food,

Drawn in select proportion fair

From richest mould and vagabond air ;

From darkness of the dreadful night,

And joyful light ;

From antique ashes, whose departed flame

In thee has finer life and longer fame ;

From wounds and balms,

From storms and calms,

From potsherds and dry bones,

And ruin-stones.

So to thy vigorous substance thou hast wrought
Whate'er the hand of Circumstance hath brought ;

Yea, into cool solacing green hast spun

White radiance hot from out the sun.

So thou dost mutually leaven

Strength of earth with grace of heaven ;

So thou dost marry new and old

Into a one of higher mould ;

So thou dost reconcile the hot and cold,

The dark and bright,

And many a heart-perplexing opposite,

And so,

Akin by blood to high and low,

Fitly thou playest out thy poet's part,

Richly expending thy much-bruised heart

In equal care to nourish lord in hall

Or beast in stall :

Thou took'st from all that thou might'st give to all.

O steadfast dweller on the selfsame spot
Where thou wast born, that still repinest not—
Type of the home-fond heart, the happy lot!—
 Deeply thy mild content rebukes the land
 Whose flimsy homes, built on the shifting sand
Of trade, for ever rise and fall
With alternation whimsical,
 Enduring scarce a day,
 Then swept away
By swift engulfments of incalculable tides
Whereon capricious Commerce rides.

Look, thou substantial spirit of content!
Across this little vale, thy continent,
 To where, beyond the mouldering mill,
 Yon old deserted Georgian hill
Bares to the sun his piteous aged crest
 And seamy breast,
By restless-hearted children left to lie
Untended there beneath the heedless sky,
As barbarous folk expose their old to die.

Upon that generous-rounding side,

With gullies scarified

Where keen Neglect his lash hath plied,

Dwelt one I knew of old, who played at toil,

And gave to coquette Cotton soul and soil.

Scorning the slow reward of patient grain,

He sowed his heart with hopes of swifter gain,

Then sat him down and waited for the rain.

He sailed in borrowed ships of usury—

A foolish Jason on a treacherous sea,

Seeking the Fleece and finding misery.

Lulled by smooth-rippling loans, in idle trance

He lay, content that unthrift Circumstance

Should plough for him the stony field of Chance.

Yea, gathering crops whose worth no man might tell,

He staked his life on games of Buy-and-Sell,

And turned each field into a gambler's hell.

Aye, as each year began,

My farmer to the neighboring city ran ;

Passed with a mournful anxious face

Into the banker's inner place ;

Parleyed, excused, pleaded for longer grace;
Railed at the drought, the worm, the rust, the grass;
Protested ne'er again 'twould come to pass;
With many an *oh* and *if* and *but alas*
Parried or swallowed searching questions rude,
And kissed the dust to soften Dives's mood.
At last, small loans by pledges great renewed,
He issues smiling from the fatal door,
And buys with lavish hand his yearly store
Till his small borrowings will yield no more.
Aye, as each year declined,
With bitter heart and ever-brooding mind
He mourned his fate unkind.
In dust, in rain, with might and main,
He nursed his cotton, cursed his grain,
Fretted for news that made him fret again,
Snatched at each telegram of Future Sale,
And thrilled with Bulls' or Bears' alternate wail—
In hope or fear alike for ever pale.

And thus from year to year, through hope and fear,
With many a curse and many a secret tear,

Striving in vain his cloud of debt to clear,

At last

He woke to find his foolish dreaming past,

And all his best-of-life the easy prey

Of squandering scamps and quacks that lined his way

With vile array,

From rascal statesman down to petty knave ;

Himself, at best, for all his bragging brave,

A gamester's catspaw and a banker's slave.

Then, worn and gray, and sick with deep unrest,

He fled away into the oblivious West,

Unmourned, unblest.

Old hill ! old hill ! thou gashed and hairy Lear

Whom the divine Cordelia of the year,

E'en pitying Spring, will vainly strive to cheer—

King, that no subject man nor beast may own,

Discrowned, undaughtered and alone—

Yet shall the great God turn thy fate,

And bring thee back into thy monarch state

And majesty immaculate.

Lo, through hot waverings of the August morn,
Thou givest from thy vasty sides forlorn
Visions of golden treasures of corn—
Ripe largesse lingering for some bolder heart
That manfully shall take thy part,
And tend thee,
And defend thee,
With antique sinew and with modern art.





THE SYMPHONY.

“O TRADE! O Trade! would thou wert dead!
The age needs heart—’tis tired of head.

We’re all for love,” the violins said.

“Of what avail the rigorous tale
Of coin for coin and box for bale?
Grant thee, O Trade! thine uttermost hope,
Level red gold with blue sky-slope,
And base it deep as devils grope,
When all’s done what hast thou won
Of the only sweet that’s under the sun?
Ay, canst thou buy a single sigh
Of true love’s least, least ecstasy?”

Then like a bridegroom's heart-beats trembling
All the mightier strings assembling
Ranged them on the violin's side
As when the bridegroom leads the bride,
And, heart in voice, together cried :

"Yea, what avail the endless tale
Of gain by cunning and plus by sale ?
Look up the land, look down the land—
(The poor, the poor, the poor, they stand
Wedged by the pressing of Trade's hand
Against an inward-opening door
That pressure tightens evermore :
They sigh a monstrous foul-air sigh
For the outside leagues of liberty,—
Where Art, sweet lark, translates the sky
Into a heavenly melody."

'Each day, all day' (these poor folks say),
'In the same old year-long, drear-long way,
We weave in the mills and heave in the kilns,
We sieve mine-meshes under the hills,
And thief much gold from the Devil's bank tills,

To relieve, O God, what manner of ills?—
Such manner of ills as brute-flesh thrills.
The beasts, they hunger, eat, sleep, die,
And so do we; our world's a sty,
And, fellow-swine, why nuzzle and cry?
Swinehood hath never a remedy,
Say many men, and pass us by,
With nostril clamped and blinking eye.
Did God say once in marvelous tone,
Man shall not live by bread alone,
But all that cometh from his throne?

Yea: God said so,

But Trade saith No,

And the kilns and the curt-tongued mills say *No*:
There's plenty that can, if you can't. Go to:
Move out, if you think you're underpaid.
The poor are prolific; we're not afraid;
Business is business; a trade is a trade.
Over and over they have said.'"

And then these passionate protestings

Merged in grieving moods, until

They sank to sad requestings

And suggestings sadder still :

"And oh, if men might some time see

How piteous-false the poor decree

That trades just naught but trades must be !

Does business mean, *Die, you—live, I?*

Then 'Trade is trade' but sings a lie :

'Tis only war grown miserly.

If Traffic is battle, name it so :

War-crimes less will shame it so,

And victims less will blame it so.

But oh, for the poor to have some part

In yon sweet living lands of Art,

Makes problem not for head, but heart.

Vainly might Plato's brain revolve it :

Plainly the heart of a child could solve it."

And then, as when from words that seem but rude

We pass to pain that dimly sits abroad

Back in our heart's great dark and solitude,

So sank the strings to gentle throbbing
Of long chords change-marked with sobbing—
Motherly sobbing, not distinctlier heard
Than half wing-openings of the sleeping bird,
Some dream of danger to her young hath stirred.

Then stirring and demurring ceased, and lo!
Every least ripple of the strings' song-flow
Died to a level with each level bow
And made a great chord tranquil-surfaced so,
As a brook beneath his curving bank doth go
To linger in the sacred dark and green
Where many boughs the still pool overlean
And many leaves make shadow with their sheen.

But presently
A velvet flute-note fell down pleasantly
Upon the bosom of that harmony,
And sailed and sailed incessantly,
As if a petal from a wild-rose blown
Had fluttered down upon that pool of tone

And boatwise dropped o' the convex side
And floated down the glassy tide
And clarified and glorified
The solemn spaces where the shadows bide.
From the warm concave of that fluted note
Somewhat, half song, half odor, forth did float,
As if a rose might somehow be a throat:

"When Nature from her far-off glen
Flutes her soft messages to men,
The flute can say them o'er again ;
Yea, Nature, singing sweet and lone,
Breathes through life's strident polyphone
The flute-voice in the world of tone.

Sweet friends,

Man's love ascends

To finer and diviner ends

Than man's mere thought e'er comprehends.

For I, e'en I,

As here I lie,

A petal on a harmony,

Demand of Science whence and why
Man's tender pain, man's inward cry,
When he doth gaze on earth and sky?
I am not overbold :

 I hold
Full powers from Nature manifold.
I speak for each no-tongued tree
That, spring by spring, doth nobler be,
And dumbly and most wistfully
His mighty prayerful arms outspreads
Above men's oft-unheeding heads,
And his big blessing downward sheds.
I speak for all-shaped blooms and leaves,
Lichens on stones and moss on eaves,
Grasses and grains in ranks and sheaves;
Broad-fronded ferns and keen-leaved canes,
And briery mazes bounding lanes,
And marsh-plants, thirsty-cupped for rains,
And milky stems and sugary veins;
For every long-armed woman-vine
That round a piteous tree doth twine ;

For passionate odors, and divine
Pistils, and petals crystalline ;
All purities of shady springs,
All shynesses of film-winged things
That fly from tree-trunks and bark-rings ;
All modesties of mountain-fawns
That leap to covert from wild lawns,
And tremble if the day but dawns ;
All sparklings of small beady eyes
Of birds, and sidelong glances wise
Wherewith the jay hints tragedies ;
All piquancies of prickly burs,
And smoothnesses of downs and furs
Of eiders and of minevers ;
All limpid honeys that do lie
At stamen-bases, nor deny
The humming-birds' fine roguery,
Bee-thighs, nor any butterfly ;
All gracious curves of slender wings,
Bark-mottlings, fibre-spiralings,
Fern-wavings and leaf-flickerings ;

Each dial-marked leaf and flower-bell
Wherewith in every lonesome dell
Time to himself his hours doth tell ;
All tree-sounds, rustlings of pine-cones,
Wind-sighings, doves' melodious moans,
And night's unearthly under-tones ;
All placid lakes and waveless deeps,
All cool reposing mountain-steeps,
Vale-calms and tranquil lotos-sleeps ;—
Yea, all fair forms, and sounds, and lights,
And warmths, and mysteries, and mights,
Of Nature's utmost depths and heights,
—These doth my timid tongue present,
Their mouthpiece and leal instrument
And servant, all love-eloquent.

I heard, when '*All for love*' the violins cried :

So, Nature calls through all her system wide,

Give me thy love, O man, so long denied.

Much time is run, and man hath changed his ways,

Since Nature, in the antique fable-days,

Was hid from man's true love by proxy fays,

False fauns and rascal gods that stole her praise.
The nymphs, cold creatures of man's colder brain,
Chilled Nature's streams till man's warm heart was fain
Never to lave its love in them again.
Later, a sweet Voice *Love thy neighbor* said;
Then first the bounds of neighborhood outspread
Beyond all confines of old ethnic dread.
Vainly the Jew might wag his covenant head:
'*All men are neighbors,*' so the sweet Voice said.
So, when man's arms had circled all man's race,
The liberal compass of his warm embrace
Stretched bigger yet in the dark bounds of space;
With hands a-grope he felt smooth Nature's grace,
Drew her to breast and kissed her sweetheart face:
His heart found neighbors in great hills and trees
And streams and clouds and suns and birds and bees,
And throbbed with neighbor-loves in loving these.
But oh, the poor! the poor! the poor!
That stand by the inward-opening door
Trade's hand doth tighten ever more,

And sigh their monstrous foul-air sigh
For the outside hills of liberty,
Where Nature spreads her wild blue sky
For Art to make into melody!
Thou Trade! thou king of the modern days!

Change thy ways,

Change thy ways;

Let the sweaty laborers file

A little while,

A little while,

Where Art and Nature sing and smile.

Trade! is thy heart all dead, all dead?

And hast thou nothing but a head?

I'm all for heart," the flute-voice said,

And into sudden silence fled,

Like as a blush that while 'tis red

Dies to a still, still white instead.

Thereto a thrilling calm succeeds,

Till presently the silence breeds

A little breeze among the reeds
That seems to blow by sea-marsh weeds:
Then from the gentle stir and fret
Sings out the melting clarionet,
Like as a lady sings while yet
Her eyes with salty tears are wet.
"O Trade! O Trade!" the Lady said,
"I too will wish thee utterly dead
If all thy heart is in thy head.
For O my God! and O my God!
What shameful ways have women trod
At beckoning of Trade's golden rod!
Alas when sighs are traders' lies,
And heart's-ease eyes and violet eyes
Are merchandise!
O purchased lips that kiss with pain!
O cheeks coin-spotted with smirch and stain!
O trafficked hearts that break in twain!
—And yet what wonder at my sisters' crime?
So hath Trade withered up Love's sinewy prime,
Men love not women as in olden time.



Ah, not in these cold merchantable days
Deem men their life an opal gray, where plays
The one red Sweet of gracious ladies'-praise.
Now, comes a suitor with sharp prying eye—
Says, *Here, you Lady, if you'll sell, I'll buy :*
Come, heart for heart—a trade? What! weeping? why
Shame on such wooers' dapper mercery!
I would my lover kneeling at my feet
In humble manliness should cry, *O sweet!*
I know not if thy heart my heart will greet :
I ask not if thy love my love can meet :
Whate'er thy worshipful soft tongue shall say,
I'll kiss thine answer, be it yea or nay :
I do but know I love thee, and I pray
To be thy knight until my dying day.
Woe him that cunning trades in hearts contrives!
Base love good women to base loving drives.
If men loved larger, larger were our lives;
And wooed they nobler, won they nobler wives."

There thrust the bold straightforward horn
To battle for that lady lorn,

With heartsome voice of mellow scorn,
Like any knight in knighthood's morn.

"Now comfort thee," said he,

Fair Ladye.

Soon shall God right thy grievous wrong,
Soon shall man sing thee a true-love song,
Voiced in act his whole life long,

Yea, all thy sweet life long,

Fair Ladye.

Where's he that craftily hath said,

The day of chivalry is dead?

I'll prove that lie upon his head,

Or I will die instead,

Fair Ladye.

Is Honor gone into his grave?

Hath Faith become a caitiff knave,

And Selfhood turned into a slave

To work in Mammon's cave,

Fair Ladye?

Will Truth's long blade ne'er gleam again?

Hath Giant Trade in dungeons slain

All great contempts of mean-got gain

And hates of inward stain,

Fair Ladye?

For aye shall name and fame be sold,

And place be hugged for the sake of gold,

And smirch-robed Justice feebly scold

At Crime all money-bold,

Fair Ladye?

Shall self-wrapt husbands aye forget

Kiss-pardons for the daily fret

Wherewith sweet wifely eyes are wet—

Blind to lips kiss-wise set—

Fair Ladye?

Shall lovers higgie, heart for heart,

Till wooing grows a trading mart

Where much for little, and all for part,

Make love a cheapening art,

Fair Ladye?

Shall woman scorch for a single sin

That her betrayer can revel in,

And she be burnt, and he but grin

When that the flames begin,

Fair Ladye?

Shall ne'er prevail the woman's plea,

We maids would far, far whiter be

If that our eyes might sometimes see

Men maids in purity,

Fair Ladye?

Shall Trade aye salve his conscience-aches

With jibes at Chivalry's old mistakes—

The wars that o'erhot knighthood makes

For Christ's and ladies' sakes,

Fair Ladye?

Now by each knight that e'er hath prayed

To fight like a man and love like a maid,

Since Pembroke's life, as Pembroke's blade,

I' the scabbard, death, was laid,

Fair Ladye,

I dare avouch my faith is bright

That God doth right and God hath might,

Nor time hath changed His hair to white,

Nor His dear love to spite,

Fair Ladye.

I doubt no doubts: I strive, and shrive my clay,

And fight my fight in the patient modern way

For true love and for thee—ah me! and pray

To be thy knight until my dying day,

Fair Ladye."

Made end that knightly horn, and spurred away

Into the thick of the melodious fray.

And then the hautboy played and smiled,

And sang like any large-eyed child,

Cool-hearted and all undefiled.

"Huge Trade!" he said,

"Would thou wouldst lift me on thy head,

And run where'er my finger led!

Once said a Man—and wise was He—

Never shalt thou the heavens see,

Save as a little child thou be."

Then o'er sea-lashings of commingling tunes

The ancient wise bassoons,

Like weird

Gray-beard

Old harpers sitting on the wild sea-dunes,

Chanted runes:

"Bright-waved gain, gray-waved loss,

The sea of all doth lash and toss,

One wave forward and one across.

But now 'twas trough, now 'tis crest,

And worst doth foam and flash to best,

And curst to blest.

"Life! Life! thou sea-fugue, writ from east to west,

Love, Love alone can pore

On thy dissolving score

Of harsh half-phrasings,

Blotted ere writ,

And double erasings

Of chords most fit.

Yea, Love, sole music-master blest,
May read thy weltering palimpsest.
To follow Time's dying melodies through,
And never to lose the old in the new,
And ever to solve the discords true—

Love alone can do.

And ever Love hears the poor-folks' crying,
And ever Love hears the women's sighing,
And ever sweet knighthood's death-defying,
And ever wise childhood's deep implying,
But never a trader's glozing and lying.

"And yet shall Love himself be heard,
Though long deferred, though long deferred:
O'er the modern waste a dove hath whirred:
Music is Love in search of a word."





PSALM OF THE WEST.

LAND of the willful gospel, thou worst and thou best ;
Tall Adam of lands, new-made of the dust of the West ;
Thou wroughtest alone in the Garden of God, unblest
Till He fashioned lithe Freedom to lie for thine Eve on thy
breast—

Till out of thy heart's dear neighborhood, out of thy side,
He fashioned an intimate Sweet one and brought thee a
Bride.

Cry hail ! nor bewail that the wound of her coming was
wide.

Lo, Freedom reached forth where the world as an apple
hung red ;

*Let us taste the whole radiant round of it, gayly she said :
If we die, at the worst we shall lie as the first of the dead.*

Knowledge of Good and of Ill, O Land ! she hath given thee ;
Perilous godhoods of choosing have rent thee and riven thee ;
Will's high adoring to Ill's low exploring hath driven thee—
Freedom, thy Wife, hath uplifted thy life and clean
shriven thee !

Her shalt thou clasp for a balm to the scars of thy breast,
Her shalt thou kiss for a calm to thy wars of unrest,
Her shalt extol in the psalm of the soul of the West.

For Weakness, in freedom, grows stronger than Strength
with a chain ;

And Error, in freedom, will come to lamenting his stain,
Till freely repenting he whiten his spirit again ;

And Friendship, in freedom, will blot out the bounding of
race ;

And straight Law, in freedom, will curve to the rounding
of grace ;

And Fashion, in freedom, will die of the lie in her face ;

And Desire flame white on the sense as a fire on a height,
And Sex flame white in the soul as a star in the night,
And Marriage plight sense unto soul as the two-colored
light

Of the fire and the star shines one with a duplicate might;
And Science be known as the sense making love to the
All,

And Art be known as the soul making love to the All,
And Love be known as the marriage of man with the All—
Till Science to knowing the Highest shall lovingly turn,
Till Art to loving the Highest shall consciously burn,
Till Science to Art as a man to a woman shall yearn,

—Then morn!

When Faith from the wedding of Knowing and Loving shall
purely be born,

And the Child shall smile in the West, and the West to
the East give morn,

And the Time in that ultimate Prime shall forget old re-
gretting and scorn,

Yea, the stream of the light give off in a shimmer the
dream of the night forlorn.

Once on a time a soul

Too full of his dole

In a querulous dream went crying from pole to pole—

Went sobbing and crying

For ever a sorrowful song of living and dying,

How life was the dropping and death the drying

Of a Tear once fell in a day when¹ God was sighing.

And ever Time tossed him bitterly to and fro

As a shuttle inlaying a perilous warp of woe

In the woof of things from terminal snow to snow,

Till, lo!

Rest.

And he sank on the grass of the earth as a lark on its
nest,

And he lay in the midst of the way from the east to the
west.

Then the East came out from the east and the West from
the west,

And, behold! in the gravid deeps of the lower dark,

While above the wind was fanning the dawn as a spark,

The East and the West took form as the wings of a lark.

One wing was feathered with facts of the uttermost Past,
And one with the dreams of a prophet; and both sailed fast
And met where the sorrowful Soul on the earth was cast.

Then a Voice said: *Thine, if thou lovest enough to use;*

But another: *To fly and to sing is pain: refuse!*

Then the Soul said: *Come, O my wings! I cannot but
choose.*

And the Soul was a-tremble like as a new-born thing,
Till the spark of the dawn wrought a conscience in heart
as in wing,

Saying, *Thou art the lark of the dawn; it is time to sing.*

Then that artist began in a lark's low circling to pass;
And first he sang at the height of the top of the grass
A song of the herds that are born and die in the mass.

And next he sang a celestial-passionate round

At the height of the lips of a woman above the ground,
How *Love was a fair true Ladye, and Death a wild
hound,*

*And she called, and he licked her hand and with girdle
was bound.*

And then with a universe-love he was hot in the wings,
And the sun stretched beams to the worlds as the shining
strings

Of the large hid harp that sounds when an all-lover sings;
And the sky's blue traction prevailed o'er the earth's in
might,

And the passion of flight grew mad with the glory of height.
And the uttering of song was like to the giving of light;
And he learned that hearing and seeing wrought nothing alone,
And that music on earth much light upon Heaven had thrown,
And he melted-in silvery sunshine with silvery tone;

And the spirals of music e'er higher and higher he wound
Till the luminous cinctures of melody up from the ground
Arose as the shaft of a tapering tower of sound—
Arose for an unstricken full-finished Babel of sound.

But God was not angry, nor ever confused his tongue,
For not out of selfish nor impudent travail was wrung
The song of all men and all things that the all-lover sung.
Then he paused at the top of his tower of song on high,
And the voice of the God of the artist from far in the
sky

Said, *Son, look down: I will cause that a Time gone by
Shall pass, and reveal his heart to thy loving eye.*

Far spread, below,

The sea that fast hath locked in his loose flow
All secrets of Atlantis' drownèd woe

Lay bound about with night on every hand,
Save down the eastern brink a shining band
Of day made out a little way from land.

Then from that shore the wind upbore a cry:

*Thou Sea, thou Sea of Darkness! why, oh why
Dost waste thy West in unthrift mystery?*

But ever the idiot sea-mouths foam and fill,
And never a wave doth good for man or ill,
And Blank is king, and Nothing hath his will;
And like as grim-beaked pelicans level file
Across the sunset toward their nightly isle
On solemn wings that wave but seldomwhile,
So leanly sails the day behind the day
To where the Past's lone Rock o'erglooms the spray,
And down its mortal fissures sinks away.

Master, Master, break this ban:

The wave lacks Thee.

Oh, is it not to widen man

Stretches the sea?

Oh, must the sea-bird's idle van

Alone be free?

Into the Sea of the Dark doth creep

Björne's pallid sail,

As the face of a walker in his sleep,

Set rigid and most pale,

About the night doth peer and peep

In a dream of an ancient tale.

Lo, here is made a hasty cry:

Land, land, upon the west!—

God save such land! Go by, go by:

Here may no mortal rest,

Where this waste hell of slate doth lie

And grind the glacier's breast.

The sail goeth limp: hey, flap and strain!

Round eastward slanteth the mast;

As the sleep-walker waked with pain,

White-clothed in the midnight blast,

Doth stare and quake, and stride again

To houseward all aghast.

Yet as, *A ghost!* his household cry:

He hath followed a ghost in flight.

Let us see the ghost—his household fly

With lamps to search the night—

So Norsemen's sails run out and try

The Sea of the Dark with light.

Stout Are Marson, southward whirled

From out the tempest's hand,

Doth skip the sloping of the world

To Huitramannaland,

Where Georgia's oaks with moss-beards curled

Wave by the shining strand,

And sway in sighs from Florida's Spring

Or Carolina's Palm—

What time the mocking-bird doth bring

The woods his artist's-balm,

Singing the Song of Everything

Consummate-sweet and calm—

Land of large merciful-hearted skies,

Big bounties, rich increase,

Green rests for Trade's blood-shotten eyes,

For o'er-beat brains surcease,

For Love the dear woods' sympathies,

For Grief the wise woods' peace,

For Need rich givings of hid powers

In hills and vales quick-won,

For Greed large exemplary flowers

That ne'er have toiled nor spun,

For Heat fair-tempered winds and showers,

For Cold the neighbor sun.

Land where the Spirits of June-Heat
 From out their forest-maze
 Stray forth at eve with loitering feet,
 And fervent hymns upraise
 In bland accord and passion sweet
 Along the Southern ways :

'O Darkness, tawny Twin whose Twin hath ceased,
 Thou Odor from the day-flower's crushing born,
 Thou visible Sigh out of the mournful East,
 That cannot see her lord again till morn !

O Leaves, with hollow palms uplifted high
 To catch the stars' most sacred rain of light !

O pallid Lily-petals fain to die
 Soul-stung by subtle passion of the night !

O short-breath'd Winds beneath the gracious moon
 Running mild errands for mild violets,

Or carrying sighs from the red lips of June
 What wavering way the odor-current sets !

O Stars wreathed vinewise round yon heavenly dells,
 Or thrust from out the sky in curving sprays,
 Or whorled, or looped with pendent flower-bells,
 Or bramble-tangled in a brilliant maze,

Or lying like young lilies in a lake

About the great white Lily of the moon,

Or drifting white from where in heaven shake

Star-portraits of apple trees in June,

Or lapp'd as leaves of a great rose of stars,

Or shyly clambering up cloud-lattices,

Or trampled pale in the red path of Mars,

Or trim-set quaint in gardeners'-fantasies!

O long June Night-sounds crooned among the leaves,

O whispered confidence of Dark and Green,

O murmurs in old moss about old eaves,

O tinklings floating over water-sheen!"

Then Leif, bold son of Eric the Red,

To the South of the West doth flee—

Past slaty Helluland is sped,

Past Markland's woody lea,

Till round about fair Vinland's head,

Where Taunton helps the sea,

The Norseman calls, the anchor falls,
The mariners hurry a-strand:
They wassail with fore-drunken skals
Where prophet wild grapes stand;
They lift the Leifsbooth's hasty walls
They stride about the land—

New England, thee! whose ne'er-spent wine
As blood doth stretch each vein,
And urge thee, sinewed like thy vine,
Through peril and all pain
To grasp Endeavor's towering Pine,
And, once ahold, remain—

Land where the strenuous-handed Wind
With sarcasm of a friend
Doth smite the man would lag behind
To frontward of his end;
Yea, where the taunting fall and grind
Of Nature's Ill doth send

Such mortal challenge of a clown
Rude-thrust upon the soul,
That men but smile where mountains frown
Or scowling waters roll,
And Nature's front of battle down
Do hurl from pole to pole.

Now long the Sea of Darkness glimmers low
With sails from Northland flickering to and fro—
Thorwald, Karlsefne, and those twin heirs of woe,
Hellboge and Finnge, in treasonable bed
Slain by the ill-born child of Eric Red,
Freydisa false. Till, as much time is fled,
Once more the vacant airs with darkness fill,
Once more the wave doth never good nor ill,
And Blank is king, and Nothing works his will ;
And leanly sails the day behind the day
To where the Past's lone Rock o'erglooms the spray,
And down its mortal fissures sinks away,
As when the grim-beaked pelicans level file
Across the sunset to their seaward isle
On solemn wings that wave but seldomwhile.

Master, Master, poets sing;

The Time calls Thee;

Yon Sea binds hard on everything

Man longs to be:

Oh, shall the sea-bird's aimless wing

Alone move free?

Santa Maria, well thou tremblest down the wave,

Thy *Pinta* far abow, thy *Niña* nigh astern:

Columbus stands in the night alone, and, passing grave,

Yearns o'er the sea as tones o'er under-silence yearn,

Heartens his heart as friend befriends his friend less brave,

Makes burn the faiths that cool, and cools the doubts

that burn:—

I.

""Twixt this and dawn, three hours my soul will smite

With prickly seconds, or less tolerably

With dull-blade minutes flatwise slapping me.

Wait, Heart! Time moves.—Thou lithe young Western

Night,

Just-crownèd king, slow riding to thy right,
Would God that I might straddle mutiny
Calm as thou sitt'st yon never-maneged sea,
Balks't with his balking, fliest with his flight,
Giv'st supple to his rearings and his falls,
Nor dropp'st one coronal star about thy brow
Whilst ever dayward thou art steadfast drawn!
Yea, would I rode these mad contentious brawls
No damage taking from their If and How,
Nor no result save galloping to my Dawn!

II.

"My Dawn? my Dawn? How if it never break?
How if this West by other Wests is pieced,
And these by vacant Wests on Wests increased—
One Pain of Space, with hollow ache on ache
Throbbing and ceasing—not for Christ's own sake?—
Big perilous theorem, hard for king and priest:
Pursue the West but long enough, 'tis East!
Oh, if this watery world no turning take!
Oh, if for all my logic, all my dreams,
Provings of that which is by that which seems,

Fears, hopes, chills, heats, hastes, patiences, droughts,
tears,

Wife-grievings, slights on love, embezzled years,
Hates, treaties, scorns, upliftings, loss and gain,—
This earth, no sphere, be all one sickening plane!

III.

“Or, haply, how if this contrarious West,
That me by turns hath starved, by turns hath fed,
Embraced, disgraced, beat back, solicited,
Have no fixed heart of Law within his breast,
Or with some different rhythm doth e’er contest
Nature in the East? Why, ’tis but three weeks fled
I saw my Judas needle shake his head
And flout the Pole that, east, he Lord confessed!
God! if this West should own some other Pole,
And with his tangled ways perplex my soul
Until the maze grow mortal, and I die
Where distraught Nature clean hath gone astray,
On earth some other wit than Time’s at play,
Some other God than mine above the sky!

IV.

'Now speaks mine other heart with cheerier seeming :

Ho, Admiral ! o'er-defalking to thy crew

Against thyself, thyself far overfew

To front yon multitudes of rebel scheming ?

Come, ye wild twenty years of heavenly dreaming !

Come, ye wild weeks since first this canvas drew

Out of vexed Palos ere the dawn was blue,

O'er milky waves about the bows full-creaming !

Come set me round with many faithful spears

Of confident remembrance—how I crushed

Cat-lived rebellions, pitfalled treasons, hushed

Scared husbands' heart-break cries on distant wives,

Made cowards blush at whining for their lives,

Watered my parching souls, and dried their tears.

V.

"Ere we Gomera cleared, a coward cried,

Turn, turn : here be three caravels ahead,

From Portugal, to take us : we are dead !—

Hold Westward, pilot, calmly I replied.

So when the last land down the horizon died,

Go back, go back! they prayed: *our hearts are lead.*—

Friends, we are bound into the West, I said.

Then past the wreck of a mast upon our side.

See (so they wept) *God's Warning! Admiral, turn!*—

Steersman, I said, *hold straight into the West.*

Then down the night we saw the meteor burn.

So do the very Heavens in fire protest:

Good Admiral, put about! O Spain, dear Spain!—

Hold straight into the West, I said again.

VI.

"Next drive we o'er the slimy-weeded sea.

Lo! herebeneath (another coward cries)

The cursèd land of sunk Atlantis lies:

This slime will suck us down—turn while thou'rt free!—

But no! I said, *Freedom bears West for me!*

Yet when the long-time stagnant winds arise,

And day by day the keel to westward flies,

My Good my people's Ill doth come to be:

Ever the winds into the West do blow;

Never a ship, once turned, might homeward go;

Meanwhile we speed into the lonesome main.

*For Christ's sake, parley, Admiral! Turn, before
We sail outside all bounds of help from pain!—
Our help is in the West, I said once more.*

VII.

*"So when there came a mighty cry of Land!
And we clomb up and saw, and shouted strong
Salve Regina! all the ropes along,
But knew at morn how that a counterfeit band
Of level clouds had aped a silver strand;
So when we heard the orchard-bird's small song,
And all the people cried, A hellish throng
To tempt us onward by the Devil planned,
Yea, all from hell—keen heron, fresh green weeds,
Pelican, tunny-fish, fair-tapering reeds,
Lie-telling lands that ever shine and die
In clouds of nothing round the empty sky.
Tired Admiral, get thee from this hell, and rest!--
Steersman, I said, hold straight into the West.*

VIII.

"I marvel how mine eye, ranging the Night,
From its big circling ever absently
Returns, thou large low Star, to fix on thee.
Maria! Star? No star: a Light, a Light!
Wouldst leap ashore, Heart? Yonder burns—a Light.
Pedro Gutierrez, wake! come up to me.
I prithee stand and gaze about the sea:
What seest? *Admiral, like as land—a Light!*
Well! Sanchez of Segovia, come and try:
What seest? *Admiral, nought but sea and sky!*
Well! But *I* saw It. Wait! the Pinta's gun!
Why, look, 'tis dawn, the land is clear: 'tis done!
Two dawns do break at once from Time's full hand—
God's, East—mine, West: good friends, behold my Land!"

Master, Master! faster fly
Now the hurrying seasons by;
Now the Sea of Darkness wide
Rolls in light from side to side;

Mark, slow drifting to the West
Down the trough and up the crest,
Yonder piteous heartsease petal
Many-motioned rise and settle—
Petal cast a-sea from land
By the awkward-fingered Hand
That, mistaking Nature's course,
Tears the love it fain would force—
Petal calm of heartsease flower
Smiling sweet on tempest sour,
Smiling where by crest and trough
Heartache Winds at heartsease scoff,
Breathing mild perfumes of prayer
'Twixt the scolding sea and air.

Mayflower, piteous Heartsease Petal!
Suavely down the sea-troughs settle,
Gravely breathe perfumes of prayer
'Twixt the scolding sea and air,
Bravely up the sea-hills rise—
Sea-hills slant thee toward the skies.

Master, hold disaster off
 From the crest and from the trough;
 Heartsease, on the heartache sea
 God, thy God, will pilot thee.

Mayflower, Ship of Faith's best Hope!
 Thou art sure if all men grope;
 Mayflower, Ship of Hope's best Faith!
 All is true the great God saith;
 Mayflower, Ship of Charity!
 Love is Lord of land and sea.
 Oh, with love and love's best care
 Thy large godly freightage bear—
 Godly Hearts that, Grails of gold,
 Still the blood of Faith do hold.

Now bold Massachusetts clear
 Cuts the rounding of the sphere.
*Out the anchor, sail no more,
 Lay us by the Future's shore—
 Not the Shore we sought, 'tis true,
 But the time is come to do.*

*Leap, dear Standish, leap and wade ;
Bradford, Hopkins, Tilley, wade :
Leap and wade ashore and kneel—
God be praised that steered the keel !
Home is good, and soft is rest,
Even in this jagged West :
Freedom lives, and Right shall stand ;
Blood of Faith is in the land.*

Then in what time the primal icy years
Scraped slowly o'er the Puritans' hopes and fears,
Like as great glaciers built of frozen tears,
The Voice from far within the secret sky
Said, *Blood of Faith ye have? So ; let us try.*

And presently

The anxious-masted ships that westward fare,
Cargo'd with trouble and a-list with care,
Their outraged decks hot back to England bear,
Then come again with stowage of worse weight,
Battle, and tyrannous Tax, and Wrong, and Hate,
And all bad items of Death's perilous freight.

O'er Cambridge set the yeomen's mark :
Climb, patriot, through the April dark.
O lantern! kindle fast thy light,
Thou budding star in the April night,
For never a star more news hath told,
Or later flame in heaven shall hold.
Ay, lantern on the North Church tower,
When that thy church hath had her hour,
Still from the top of Reverence high
Shalt thou illumine Fame's ampler sky ;
For, statured large o'er town and tree,
Time's tallest Figure stands by thee,
And, dim as now thy wick may shine
The Future lights his lamp at thine.

Now haste thee while the way is clear,

Paul Revere!

Haste, Dawes! but haste thou not, O Sun!

To Lexington.

Then Devens looked and saw the light :
He got him forth into the night,

And watched alone on the river-shore,
And marked the British ferrying o'er.

John Parker! rub thine eyes and yawn:
But one o'clock and yet 'tis Dawn!
Quick, rub thine eyes and draw thy hose:
The Morning comes ere darkness goes.
Have forth and call the yeomen out,
For somewhere, somewhere close about
Full soon a Thing must come to be
Thine honest eyes shall stare to see—
Full soon before thy patriot eyes
Freedom from out of a Wound shall rise.

Then haste ye, Prescott and Revere!
Bring all the men of Lincoln here;
Let Chelmsford, Littleton, Carlisle,
Let Acton, Bedford, hither file—
Oh hither file, and plainly see
Out of a wound leap Liberty.

Say, Woodman April! all in green,
Say, Robin April! hast thou seen
In all thy travel round the earth
Ever a morn of calmer birth?
But Morning's eye alone serene
Can gaze across yon village-green
To where the trooping British run
Through Lexington.

Good men in fustian, stand ye still;
The men in red come o'er the hill.
Lay down your arms, damned Rebels! cry
The men in red full haughtily.
But never a grounding gun is heard;
The men in fustian stand unstirred;
Dead calm, save maybe a wise bluebird
Puts in his little heavenly word.
O men in red! if ye but knew
The half as much as bluebirds do,
Now in this little tender calm
Each hand would out, and every palm

With patriot palm strike brotherhood's stroke
Or ere these lines of battle broke.

O men in red! if ye but knew
The least of the all that bluebirds do,
Now in this little godly calm
Yon voice might sing the Future's Psalm—
The Psalm of Love with the brotherly eyes
Who pardons and is very wise—
Yon voice that shouts, high-hoarse with ire,

Fire!

The red-coats fire, the homespuns fall:
The homespuns' anxious voices call,
Brother, art hurt? and Where hit, John?
And, *Wipe this blood, and Men, come on,*
And *Neighbor, do but lift my head,*
And *Who is wounded? Who is dead?*
Seven are killed. My God! my God!
Seven lie dead on the village sod.
Two Harringtons, Parker, Hadley, Brown,
Monroe and Porter,—these are down.

Nay, look ! Stout Harrington not yet dead !
He crooks his elbow, lifts his head.
He lies at the step of his own house-door ;
He crawls and makes a path of gore.
The wife from the window hath seen, and rushed ;
He hath reached the step, but the blood hath gushed ;
He hath crawled to the step of his own house-door,
But his head hath dropped : he will crawl no more.
Clasp, Wife, and kiss, and lift the head :
Harrington lies at his doorstep dead.

But, O ye Six that round him lay
And bloodied up that April day !
As Harrington fell, ye likewise fell—
At the door of the House wherein ye dwell ;
As Harrington came, ye likewise came
And died at the door of your House of Fame.

Go by, old Field of Freedom's hopes and fears ;
Go by, old Field of Brothers' hate and tears :
Behold ! yon home of Brothers' Love appears

Set in the burnished silver of July,
On Schuylkill wrought as in old broidery
Clasped hands upon a shining baldric lie.
New Hampshire, Georgia, and the mighty ten
That lie between, have heard the huge-nibbed pen
Of Jefferson tell the rights of man to men.

They sit in the reverend Hall: *Shall we declare?*
Floats round about the anxious-quivering air
'Twixt narrow Schuylkill and broad Delaware.
Already, Land! thou *hast* declared: 'tis done.
Ran ever clearer speech than that did run
When the sweet Seven died at Lexington?

Canst legibler write than Concord's large-stroked Act,
Or when at Bunker Hill the clubbed guns cracked?
Hast ink more true than blood, or pen' than fact?
Nay, as the poet mad with heavenly fires
Flings men his song white-hot, then back retires,
Cools heart, broods o'er the song again, inquires,
Why did I this, why that? and slowly draws
From Art's unconscious act Art's conscious laws;
So, Freedom, writ, declares her writing's cause.

All question vain, all chill foreboding vain.
Adams, ablaze with faith, is hot and fain;
And he, straight-fibred Soul of mighty grain,
 Deep-rooted Washington, afire, serene—
 Tall Bush that burns, yet keeps its substance green—
 Sends daily word, of import calm yet keen,
Warm from the front of battle, till the fire
Wraps opposition in and flames yet higher,
And Doubt's thin tissues flash where Hope's aspire;
 And, *Ay, declare*, and ever strenuous *Ay*
 Falls from the Twelve, and Time and Nature cry
 Consent with kindred burnings of July;
And delegate Dead from each past age and race,
Viewless to man, in large procession pace
Downward athwart each set and steadfast face,
 Responding *Ay* in many tongues; and lo!
 Manhood and Faith and Self and Love and Woe
 And Art and Brotherhood and Learning go
Rearward the files of dead, and softly say
Their saintly *Ay*, and softly pass away
By airy exits of that ample day.

Now fall the chill reactionary snows
Of man's defect, and every wind that blows
Keeps back the Spring of Freedom's perfect Rose.
Now naked feet with crimson fleck the ways,
And Heaven is stained with flags that mutinies raise,
And Arnold-spotted move the creeping days.
Long do the eyes that look from Heaven see
Time smoke, as in the spring the mulberry tree,
With buds of battles opening fitfully,
Till Yorktown's winking vapors slowly fade,
And Time's full top casts down a pleasant shade
Where Freedom lies unarmed and unafraid.

Master, ever faster fly
Now the vivid seasons by;
Now the glittering Western land
Twins the day-lit Eastern Strand;
Now white Freedom's sea-bird wing
Roams the Sea of Everything;
Now the freemen to and fro
Bind the tyrant sand and snow,

Snatching Death's hot bolt ere hurled,
Flash new Life about the world,
Sun the secrets of the hills,
Shame the gods' slow-grinding mills,
Prison Yesterday in Print,
Read To-morrow's weather-hint,
Haste before the halting Time,
Try new virtue and new crime,
Mould new faiths, devise new creeds,
Run each road that frontward leads,
Driven by an Onward-ache,
Scorning souls that circles make.

Now, O Sin! O Love's lost Shame!
Burns the land with redder flame:
North in line and South in line
Yell the charge and spring the mine.
Heartstrong South would have his way,
Headstrong North hath said him nay:
O strong Heart, strong Brain, beware!
Hear a Song from out the air:

I.

"Lists all white and blue in the skies;
And the people hurried amain
To the Tournament under the ladies' eyes
Where jousted Heart and Brain.

II.

"*Blow, herald, blow!* There entered Heart,
A youth in crimson and gold.
Blow, herald, blow! Brain stood apart,
Steel-armored, glittering, cold.

III.

"Heart's palfrey caracoled gayly round,
Heart tra-li-raed merrily;
But Brain sat still, with never a sound—
Full cynical-calm was he.

IV.

"Heart's helmet-crest bore favors three
From his lady's white hand caught;
Brain's casque was bare as Fact—not he
Or favor gave or sought.

V.

"*Blow, herald, blow!* Heart shot a glance
To catch his lady's eye;
But Brain looked straight a-front, his lance
To aim more faithfully.

VI.

"They charged, they struck; both fell, both bled;
Brain rose again, ungloved;
Heart fainting smiled, and softly said,
My love to my Beloved."

Heart and Brain! no more be twain;
Throb and think, one flesh again!
Lo! they weep, they turn, they run;
Lo! they kiss: Love, thou art one!

Now the Land, with drying tears,
Counts him up his flocks of years,
"See," he says, "my substance grows;
Hundred-flocked my Herdsman goes,

Hundred-flocked my Herdsman stands
On the Past's broad meadow-lands.
Come from where ye mildly graze,
Black herds, white herds, nights and days.
Drive them homeward, Herdsman Time,
From the meadows of the Prime:
I will feast my house, and rest.
Neighbor East, come over West;
Pledge me in good wine and words
While I count my hundred herds,
Sum the substance of my Past
From the first unto the last,
Chanting o'er the generous brim
Cloudy memories yet more dim,
Ghostly rhymes of Norsemen pale
Staring by old Björne's sail,
Strains more noble of that night
Worn Columbus saw his Light,
Psalms of still more heavenly tone,
How the Mayflower tossed alone,

Olden tale and later song
Of the Patriot's love and wrong,
Grandsire's ballad, nurse's hymn—
Chanting o'er the sparkling brim
Till I shall from first to last
Sum the substance of my Past."

Then called the Artist's God from in the sky:
"This Time shall show by dream and mystery
The heart of all his matter to thine eye.
Son, study stars by looking down in streams,
Interpret that which is by that which seems,
And tell thy dreams in words which are but dreams."

I.

The Master with His lucent hand
Pinched up the atom hills and plains
O'er all the moiety of land
The ocean-bounded West contains:
The dust lay dead upon the calm
And mighty middle of His palm.

II.

And lo! He wrought full tenderly,
And lo! He wrought with love and might,
And lo! He wrought a thing to see
Was marvel in His people's sight:
He wrought His image dead and small,
A nothing fashioned like an All.

III.

Then breathed He softly on the dead:
"Live Self!—thou part, yet none, of Me:
Dust for humility," He said;
"And my warm breath for Charity.
Behold my latest work, thou Earth!
The Self of Man is taking birth."

IV.

Then, Land, tall Adam of the West,
Thou stood'st upon the springy sod,
Thy large eye ranging self-possest,
Thy limbs the limbs of God's young god,
Thy Passion murmuring *I will—*
Lord of the Lordship Good-and-Ill.

V.

O manful arms, of supple size
To clasp a world or a waist as well!
O manful eyes, to front the skies
Or look much pity down on hell!
O manful tongue, to work and sing,
And soothe a child and dare a king!

VI.

O wonder! Now thou sleep'st in pain,
Like as some dream thy soul did grieve:
God wounds thee, heals thee whole again,
And calls thee trembling to thine Eve.
Wide-armed, thou dropp'st on knightly knee:
Dear Love, dear Freedom, go with me!

VII.

Then all the beasts before thee passed—
Beast War, Oppression, Murder, Lust,
False Art, False Faith, slow skulking last—
And out of Time's thick-rising dust
Thy Lord said, "Name them, tame them, Son;
Nor rest, nor rest, till thou hast done."

· VII.

Ah, name thou false, or tame thou wrong,
At heart let no man fear for thee;

Thy Past sings ever Freedom's Song,
Thy Future's voice sounds wondrous free;
And Freedom is more large than Crime,
And Error is more small than Time.

IX.

Come, thou whole Self of Latter Man!
Come o'er thy realm of Good-and-Ill,
And do, thou Self that say'st *I can*,
And love, thou Self that say'st *I will*;
And prove and know Time's worst and best,
Thou tall young Adam of the West!





IN ABSENCE.

I.

THE storm that snapped our fate's one ship in twain
Hath blown my half o' the wreck from thine apart.
O Love! O Love! across the gray-waved main
To thee-ward strain my eyes, my arms, my heart.
I ask my God if e'en in His sweet place,
Where, by one waving of a wistful wing,
My soul could straightway tremble face to face
With thee, with thee, across the stellar ring—
Yea, where thine absence I could ne'er bewail
Longer than lasts that little blank of bliss

When lips draw back, with recent pressure pale,
To round and redden for another kiss—

Would not my lonesome heart still sigh for thee
What time the drear kiss-intervals must be?

II.

So do the mottled formulas of Sense

Glide snakewise through our dreams of Aftertime;
So errors breed in reeds and grasses dense
That bank our singing rivulets of rhyme.

By Sense rule Space and Time; but in God's Land

Their intervals are not, save such as lie
Betwixt successive tones in concords bland

Whose loving distance makes the harmony.

Ah, There shall never come 'twixt me and thee

Gross dissonances of the mile, the year;

But in the multichords of ecstasy

Our souls shall mingle, yet be featured clear,

And absence, wrought to intervals divine,

Shall part, yet link, thy nature's tone and mine.

III.

Look down the shining peaks of all my days
Base-hidden in the valleys of deep night,
So shalt thou see the heights and depths of praise
My love would render unto love's delight;
For I would make each day an Alp sublime
Of passionate snow, white-hot yet icy-clear,
—One crystal of the true-loves of all time
Spiring the world's prismatic atmosphere;
And I would make each night an awful vale
Deep as thy soul, obscure as modesty,
With every star in heaven trembling pale
O'er sweet profounds where only Love can see.
Oh, runs not thus the lesson thou hast taught?—
When life's all love, 'tis life: aught else, 'tis naught.

IV.

Let no man say, *He at his lady's feet*
Lays worship that to Heaven alone belongs;
Yea, swings the incense that for God is meet
' In flippanc censors of light lover's songs.

Who says it, knows not God, nor love, nor thee ;

For love is large as is yon heavenly dome :

In love's great blue, each passion is full free

To fly his favorite flight and build his home.

Did e'er a lark with skyward-pointing beak

Stab by mischance a level-flying dove ?

Wife-love flies level, his dear mate to seek :

God-love darts straight into the skies above.

Crossing, the windage of each other's wings

But speeds them both upon their journeyings.





ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

I.

O AGE that half believ'st thou half believ'st,
Half doubt'st the substance of thine own half doubt,
And, half perceiving that thou half perceiv'st,
Stand'st at thy temple door, heart in, head out !
Lo ! while thy heart 's within, helping the choir,
Without, thine eyes range up and down the time,
Blinking at o'er-bright science, smit with desire
To see and not to see. Hence, crime on crime.
Yea, if the Christ (called thine) now paced yon street,

Thy halfness hot with His rebuke would swell,
Legions of scribes would rise and run and beat
His fair intolerable Wholeness twice to hell.

*Nay (so, dear Heart, thou whisperest in my soul),
'Tis a half time, yet Time will make it whole.*

II.

Now at thy soft recalling voice I rise
Where thought is lord o'er Time's complete estate,
Like as a dove from out the gray sedge flies
To tree-tops green where coos his heavenly mate.

From these clear coverts high and cool I see
How every time with every time is knit,
And each to all is mortised cunningly,
And none is sole or whole, yet all are fit.

Thus, if this Age but as a comma show
'Twixt weightier clauses of large-worded years,
My calmer soul scorns not the mark : I know
This crooked point Time's complex sentence clears.
Yet more I learn while, Friend ! I sit by thee :
Who sees all time, sees all eternity.

III.

If I do ask, How God can dumbness keep
While Sin creeps grinning through His house of Time,
Stabbing His saintliest children in their sleep,
And staining holy walls with clots of crime?—

Or, How may He whose wish but names a fact
Refuse what miser's-scanting of supply

Would richly glut each void where man hath lacked
Of grace or bread?—or, How may Power deny

Wholeness to th' almost-folk that hurt our hope—
These heart-break Hamlets who so barely fail

In life or art that but a hair's more scope
Had set them fair on heights they ne'er may scale?—

Somehow by thee, dear Love, I win content :

Thy Perfect stops th' Imperfect's argument.

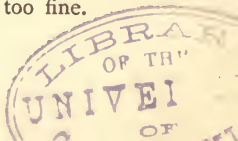
IV.

By the more height of thy sweet stature grown,

Twice-eyed with thy gray vision set in mine,

I ken far lands to wifeless men unknown,

I compass stars for one-sexed eyes too fine.



No text on sea-horizons cloudily writ,

No maxim vaguely starred in fields or skies,

But this wise thou-in-me deciphers it:

Oh, thou'rt the Height of heights, the Eye of eyes.

Not hardest Fortune's most unbounded stress

Can blind my soul nor hurl it from on high,

Possessing thee, the self of loftiness,

And very light that Light discovers by.

Howe'er thou turn'st, wrong Earth! still Love's in sight

For we are taller than the breadth of night.





BETRAYAL.

THE sun has kissed the violet sea,
And burned the violet to a rose.

O Sea! wouldst thou not better be

Mere violet still? Who knows? who knows?

Well hides the violet in the wood:

The dead leaf wrinkles her a hood,

And winter's ill is violet's good;

But the bold glory of the rose,

It quickly comes and quickly goes—

Red petals whirling in white snows,

Ah me!

The sun has burnt the rose-red sea :

The rose is turned to ashes gray.

O Sea, O Sea, mightst thou but be

The violet thou hast been to-day !

The sun is brave, the sun is bright,

The sun is lord of love and light ;

But after him it cometh night.

Dim anguish of the lonesome dark !—

Once a girl's body, stiff and stark,

Was laid in a tomb without a mark,

Ah me !





SPECIAL PLEADING.

TIME, hurry my Love to me:
Haste, haste! Lov'st not good company?
Here 's but a heart-break sandy waste
'Twixt now and Then. Why, killing haste
Were best, dear Time, for thee, for thee!

Oh, would that I might divine
Thy name beyond the zodiac sign
• Wherefrom our times-to-come descend.
He called thee *Sometime*. Change it, friend:
Now-time sounds so much more fine!

Sweet Sometime, fly fast to me:

Poor Now-time sits in the Lonesome-tree

And broods as gray as any dove,

And calls, *When wilt thou come, O Love?*

And pleads across the waste to thee.

Good Moment, that giv'st him me,

Wast ever in love? Maybe, maybe

Thou'lt be this heavenly velvet time

When Day and Night as rhyme and rhyme

Set lip to lip dusk-modestly;

Or haply some noon afar,

—O life's top bud, mixt rose and star,

How ever can thine utmost sweet

Be star-consummate, rose-complete,

Till thy rich reds full opened are?

Well, be it dusk-time or noon-time,

I ask but one small boon, Time:

Come thou in night, come thou in day,

I care not, I care not: have thine own way,

But only, but only, come soon, Time.



TO CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

LOOK where a three-point star shall weave his beam
Into the slumb'rous tissue of some stream,
Till his bright self o'er his bright copy seem
Fulfillment dropping on a come-true dream ;
So in this night of art thy soul doth show
Her excellent double in the steadfast flow
Of wishing love that through men's hearts doth go :
At once thou shin'st above and shin'st below.
E'en when thou strivest there within Art's sky
(Each star must o'er a strenuous orbit fly),
Full calm thine image in our love doth lie,
A Motion glassed in a Tranquillity.
So triple-rayed, thou mov'st, yet stay'st, serene—
Art's artist, Love's dear woman, Fame's good queen !



ROSE-MORALS.

I.—RED.

WOULD that my songs might be
What roses make by day and night—
Distillments of my clod of misery
Into delight.

Soul, could'st thou bare thy breast
As yon red rose, and dare the day,
All clean, and large, and calm with velvet rest?
Say yea—say yea!

Ah, dear my Rose, good-bye;
The wind is up; so; drift away.
That songs from me as leaves from thee may fly,
I strive, I pray.

II.—WHITE.

Soul, get thee to the heart

Of yonder tuberose: hide thee there—

There breathe the meditations of thine art

Suffused with prayer.

Of spirit grave yet light,

How fervent fragrances uprise

Pure-born from these most rich and yet most white

Virginities!

Mulched with unsavory death,

Grow, Soul! unto such white estate,

That virginal-prayerful art shall be thy breath,

Thy work, thy fate.





TO —, WITH A ROSE.

I ASKED my heart to say
Some word whose worth my love's devoir might pay
Upon my Lady's natal day.

Then said my heart to me :
*Learn from the rhyme that now shall come to thee
What fits thy Love most lovingly.*

This gift that learning shows ;
For, as a rhyme unto its rhyme-twin goes,
I send a rose unto a Rose.

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